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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 003690

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PINS PTER PGOV MOPS IZ

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR AND COMMANDING GENERAL DISCUSS TAL AFAR
WITH PRIME MINISTER AND MCNS

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES, a.i., DAVID M. SATTERFIELD FOR REASON
S 1.4 (a), (b), AND (d).

¶1. (S/REL GBR AUS IRAQ) SUMMARY: The Iraqi Ministerial Committee for National Security, chaired by Prime Minister Jaafari, met September 5 to discuss the evolving situation in Tal Afar and to plan a future course of action. Fears were expressed that engaging in decisive military operations to flush the insurgents from the city would result in potentially heavy civilian casualties. While hope was held that the Iraqi insurgents within the city could be enticed to surrender or leave with an offer of amnesty, members agreed that it is likely any foreign fighters in the city will stay and fight. Concerns were also expressed that plans for the post-conflict phase lag behind the military plans and are not firm enough at this point to execute with confidence. It was agreed that military shaping operations would continue, as would political attempts to reach a solution that would minimize the potential for major damage to the city or its inhabitants. Planning for humanitarian operations, reconstruction, compensation, and post-conflict governance will also continue and will include a timeline for execution.
END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S/REL GBR AUS IRAQ) Prime Minister Jaafari called a meeting of the Ministerial Council on National Security (MCNS) the night of September 5 to discuss the evolving situation in Tal Afar. Ambassador, MNF-I Commanding General and Deputy Commanding General, British Ambassador, and Acting PolMil Counselor attended. In addition to the PM, the Ministers of Defense, Interior, and National Security Affairs attended, as did the National Security Advisor, the PM's lead action officer on Tal Afar (Mr. Adnan Ali al-Kadhami), and Mr. Safa al-Safi, Minister of State for Transitional National Assembly Affairs.

CURRENT SITUATION

¶3. (S/REL GBR AUS IRAQ) The PM asked for an update from MNF-I on the current situation. DCG Brims explained that the Coalition Forces (CF) and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) in the area of Tal Afar have not yet launched decisive operations and are taking care not to signal to the enemy that such operations are about to commence until the last possible moment. However, U.S. and Iraqi patrols are active in most parts of the city and are engaged in shaping operations in preparation for decisive operations. Their mission is to (1) set the conditions for continued political engagement between the local tribes, the insurgents, and the Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG); (2) permit the entry and staging of humanitarian aid in the city; (3) show the people of the city that ISF and CF are there to protect them by expelling the insurgents who have seized control; (4) assure that the tribes who have agreed to cooperate with the ITG and CF are doing so; and (5) prepare to engage the enemy in a decisive way.

¶4. (S/REL GBR AUS IRAQ) DCG Brims reported that one Iraqi Army brigade and slightly less than one U.S. Army brigade are currently operating in and directly around the city. There are pockets of the enemy in various parts of the city, most notably in the Surai district. Approximately 50 insurgents have been killed or captured and one U.S. soldier was killed today. We believe that the tribal sheiks are keeping their word to us and are cooperating with CF and ISF. We have also been in touch with the Iraqi Red Crescent and they are in the process of moving humanitarian supplies into safe locations within the city. Ambassador pointed out that just because shaping operations are taking place does not mean decisive operations are inevitable.

THE IRAQI "PLAN"

¶5. (S/REL GBR AUS IRAQ) Ambassador asked the PM to describe the Iraqi plan for post-decisive operations in the city. Questions included: How will the police force be reconstituted to avoid continued inter-tribal strife? What are the plans for humanitarian aid, reconstruction, governance, and compensation? The PM explained that after his last discussion with the Ambassador on this, he had sent a delegation to Tal Afar to investigate the nature of the

fighting and to determine whether a peaceful, political solution was possible. Adnan Ali led this delegation. They determined that the tribal leaders now say they are willing to cooperate with the ITG and each other to rid the city of terrorists. There is therefore the possibility that inter-tribal conflicts in the city can be controlled peacefully. However, the need for military action is still a very real possibility.

16. (S/REL GBR AUS IRAQ) Ambassador inquired whether the ITG would like to cease shaping operations to pursue a political option. The PM replied that he would prefer to follow parallel paths of dialogue on the one hand and military preparations on the other. In his view, the stronger the military presence, the greater the incentive for the insurgents to negotiate. One difficulty the ITG faces with the tribes is that they will not agree to identify members who are with the insurgents. It is a matter of dignity and tradition to them not to betray their own. (NOTE: It also seems that the tribal leaders are afraid of retribution if they do. END NOTE.) However, tribal leaders have agreed to identify insurgent strongholds to CF and ISF.

17. (S/REL GBR AUS IRAQ) Returning to the Ambassador's question about post-decisive operations plans, the Minister of Interior reported that immediately following the operation he is prepared to deploy Public Order Battalions and Police Commando units into the city to restore and maintain order. They will remain for approximately one month. In the meantime, a new police force reflecting the diversity of the city will be recruited and trained. Each tribal sheik has agreed to nominate ten members to become police officers. Ambassador pointed out that it is critical that a competent, respected, and neutral police chief be appointed. The Minister reported that his Deputy in charge of police will travel to Tal Afar on September 6 to solidify plans.

18. (S/REL GBR AUS IRAQ) With regard to compensation and reconstruction, Adnan Ali pointed out that the ITG would be looking to the CF for financial assistance. He indicated that the tribes had agreed to cooperate in return for a promise of reconstruction and compensation for damages suffered, and now it is incumbent upon us to assist. Further discussion revealed that the Iraqi effort to prepare for humanitarian assistance is still weak. GEN Casey recommended that these plans be solidified to include a timeline. Current efforts to position humanitarian relief supplies in the city should continue.

CONCERN FOR NONCOMBATANTS

19. (S/REL GBR AUS IRAQ) The PM expressed great concern for the welfare of the citizens of Tal Afar, and the Iraqi participants spent much time debating among themselves possible strategies to reduce the potential for civilian casualties. National Security Advisor Rubaie pressed for a plan that would offer an amnesty to Iraqi fighters but would give no quarter to foreign fighters. He hoped that faced with overwhelming ISF and CF military might, the Iraqi insurgents would either surrender or turn on their foreign compatriots. Another plan was to leave an exit for the foreign fighters, squeeze them through it and then engage and destroy them outside of the city. Eventually, most participants seemed resigned to the fact that the foreign fighters will stay and fight.

110. (S/REL GBR AUS IRAQ) There was concern that the foreign fighters would use women and children as human shields, resulting in the death of many innocents. Adnan Ali reported that most civilians in the Surai district have already departed, and the tribal leaders are quietly convincing those who still remain to leave. GEN Casey said he shared these concerns and agreed with the assessment that the tribes have already evacuated most civilians from Surai. He said he believes that the insurgents, Iraqis and foreign fighters alike, are digging in and preparing to stay and fight.

CONCLUSION

111. (S/REL GBR AUS IRAQ) The PM concluded that we should move forward to support the mission. The locals must continue to engage in a political dialogue. At the same time, military preparations must continue. The ISF and CF must move forward to isolate Surai and "we will deal with the reality of what happens," he said. If the insurgents stay and fight, they must be defeated. It was agreed that humanitarian preparations already underway would continue and that a firmed up plan for post-decisive operations, to include a timeline, would be formulated.

COMMENT

112. (S/REL GBR AUS IRAQ) The lack of a firm, articulable plan for humanitarian relief, reconstruction, compensation, and post-conflict governance continues to be troubling. END
COMMENT.
Satterfield